Reserve

Research Note

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LUMBER PRODUCTION TOPS 24-YEAR RECORD IN NORTHERN REGION

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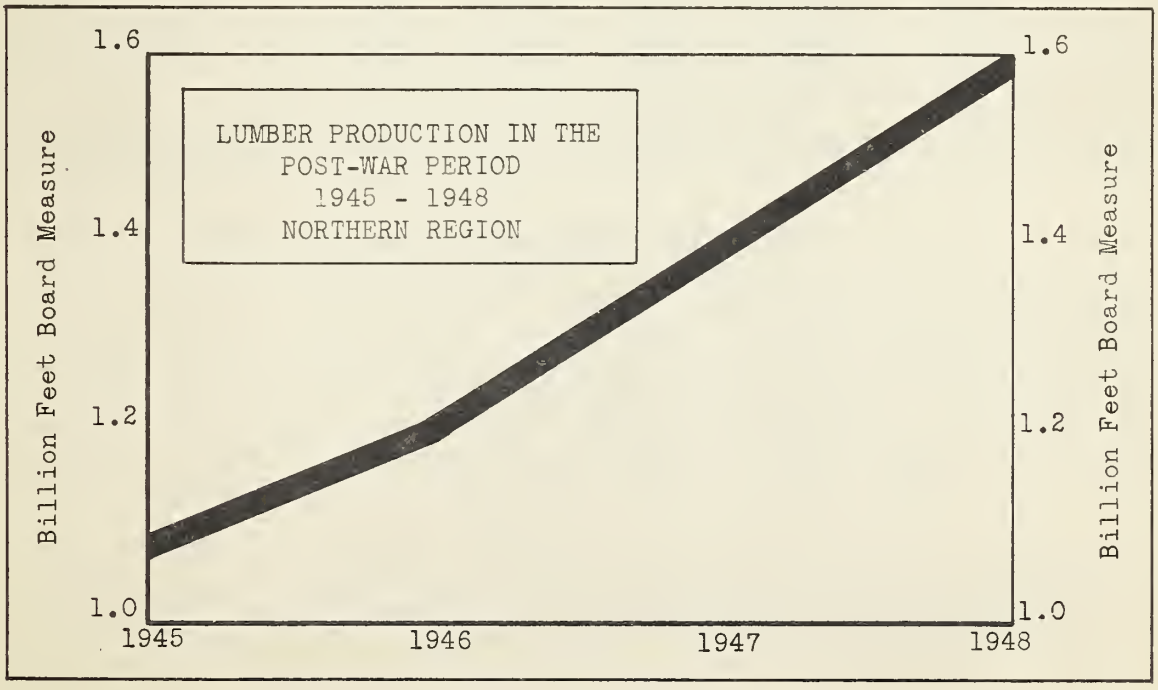
Producing 1.65 billion feet, board measure of lumber in 1948, the lumber industry in the Northern Region 1/ topped its production record since 1925. In this 24-year period annual production dropped to a low of 422 million feet in 1932 and followed a general upward trend in subsequent years. More recently in the post-war period, 1945 to 1948, regional production has risen 51 percent from 1.09 to 1.65 billion feet. From 1947 to 1948 the sharpest rise within this region was in Northeast Washington where production went up 29 percent; Montana was second with an increase of 20 percent; and North Idaho third with 14 percent. (See table 1.)

The lumber output by major species in 1948 followed the same general pattern as in the past four years. Ponderosa pine was the leading lumber species followed by Douglas-fir, western white pine, and western larch.



1/ Montana; Idaho north of the Salmon River; and Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman Counties, Northeast Washington.

Production of minor species varied widely from year to year. For example, from 1946 to 1948, when the total production of the Region went up 35 percent, the output of Engelmann spruce production went up 67 percent, western hemlock went down 62 percent, and western redcedar went down 3 percent.

Although the total number of sawmills decreased slightly in the Region, there were more active and fewer idle mills in 1948 than in 1946. Production records indicate that the greater number of active mills plus the higher average production per active mill, rather than the installation of new mills, accounted for the sizeable production increase.

The proportion of the total lumber output cut by large and small mills was approximately the same in 1948 as in 1946. Although a number of small mills shut down or reduced production in 1948, it is evident that the general increase of the remaining small mills maintained the relative position of this group in the total output. In 1948 small mills (those cutting less than 5 million feet annually) accounted for 30 percent of the regional output. Large mills (those cutting 5 million feet or more) accounted for 70 percent.

Table 1. The lumber production trend - 1945-1948

State and region	Production by years and percent change					
	1945	1946	1947	1948	Change 1947-1948	Change 1945-1948
	Million ft. b.m.				Percent	
NE Washington	141	182	208	269	+29	+91
North Idaho	611	630	689	786	+14	+29
Montana	342	415	500	598	+20	+75
Northern Region	1094	1227	1397	1653	+18	+51

Method of making the 1948 lumber production survey

Lumber production data for 1948 were obtained through the joint efforts of the Western Pine Association and the Forest Service. The Northern Rocky Mountain Forest & Range Experiment Station of the Forest Service collected tabulated data for 155 mills and sampled the production of 403 mills. The Western Pine Association collected data from 310 mills. Personnel of the various national forests and of the regional office, Region 1, assembled lists of sawmills and did some of the field followup work.

The procedure to determine the 1948 lumber production was as follows: A list of sawmills known to the various national forests in the Region was submitted to the station and was supplemented from station records. This

list was used by the Western Pine Association in mailing production report forms to sawmills. Those mills that did not respond to the Western Pine Association mail request were solicited subsequently by mail by the Forest Service. Field followup work was done to get records of mills which produced one million board feet or more in 1948. Records from 11 Class-III mills (annual production of 1 to 4.9 million board feet) were not obtained and to determine their production, a 20-percent sample was drawn from reports of 57 Class-III mills. The nonresponding smaller mills the Forest Service divided into two groups: those producing 200,000 to 999,000 board feet and those producing 199,000 board feet or less. An 8-percent random sample was drawn from the first group and a 4-percent sample of the second group. The sample mills were contacted to get their production status and the average of their production was multiplied by the number of nonresponding mills in each class to determine total production of the nonresponding mills. The total production for all mills was determined by adding the individual mill data reported to the Western Pine Association and the Northern Rocky Mountain Forest & Range Experiment Station to the production sample for the nonresponding mills.

Table 2. Lumber production by mill class - 1948

Mill class	Production range	Montana	North Idaho	Northeast Washington	Northern Region
	M ft. b.m.	------	Million ft. b.m.	------	
0	Less than 50	14.4	4.2	0.9	19.5
I-a	50 - 199	20.8	9.8	3.1	33.7
I-b	200 - 499	36.8	17.4	9.3	63.5
II	500 - 999	30.6	15.5	9.1	55.2
III	1,000 - 4,999	155.8	114.7	54.3	324.8
IV	5,000 - 9,999	130.6	114.6	41.4	286.6
V 1/	10,000 and larger	208.9	510.4	150.5	869.8
Total		597.9	786.6	268.6	1,653.1

1/ Mill Class V and larger grouped to avoid disclosing production of individual mills.

Table 3. Lumber production by species - 1948

Species	Montana	Northeast Washington 1/	North Idaho 2/	South Idaho	Idaho	Northern Region 3/
			M ft. b.m.			
Western white pine	13,464	31,270	225,102	--	225,102	269,336
Ponderosa pine	223,569	133,787	191,085	225,996	417,081	548,441
Douglas-fir	210,896	51,789	147,880	66,621	214,501	410,565
Western larch	129,259	42,373	86,850	1,400	88,250	258,482
Grand fir	106	4,265	106,887	8,988	115,875	111,258
Engelmann spruce	16,705	3,636	8,961	8,896	17,857	29,302
Western redcedar	1,068	1,236	17,888	--	17,888	20,192
Western hemlock	196	132	1,807	--	1,807	2,135
Lodgepole pine	2,619	60	95	5,081	5,176	2,774
Cottonwood	60	81	--	57	57	141
Other	2	--	--	55	55	2
Total	597,944	268,629	786,555	317,094	1,103,649	1,653,128
			Number of sawmills			
Active	434	110	239	174	413	783
Idle	45	18	22	48	70	85
Total	479	128	261	222	483	368

1/ Includes Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman Counties.
2/ Includes that part of Idaho north of the Salmon River.
3/ Includes Montana, Northeast Washington, and North Idaho.

Table 4. Lumber production by states and counties - 1948

State and county	Lumber production	State and county	Lumber production
	M ft. b.m.		M ft. b.m.
Northeast Washington		Montana 1/	
Ferry	20,800	Beaverhead, Madison and Silver Bow	6,315
Lincoln	32,046	Broadwater and Jefferson	1,399
Pend Oreille	41,032	Carbon, Gallatin, Park, Sweet-grass and Yellowstone	8,832
Spokane	128,711	Carter and Powder River	1,980
Stevens	43,430	Cascade, Fergus, Musselshell and Wheatland	2,841
Whitman	2,610	Flathead and Glacier	165,886
Total	268,629	Granite and Ravalli	30,549
		Missoula and Powell	147,440
North Idaho 1/		Lake	25,743
Benewah	32,595	Lewis & Clark	18,083
Bonner	98,079	Lincoln	120,840
Boundary	23,856	Mineral and Teton	20,422
Clearwater	85,809	Sanders	42,100
Idaho	48,758	Bighorn, Blaine, Rosebud, Judith Basin, Richland and Stillwater	2,725
Kootenai	139,968	Meagher	2,268
Latah	92,288	Deerlodge	521
Lewis and Nez Perce	237,918		
Shoshone	27,284		
Total	786,555	Total	597,944
Total Northern Region			1,653,128

1/ Counties have been combined to avoid disclosing operations of individual plants.

Accuracy of the 1948 survey

Individual mill production reports were received from 465 active mills for 1,549,666,000 feet, board measure of lumber. This represents 94 percent of the total production estimate. For the 403 mills which did not return a production report, a random sample was drawn from three stratifications: (1) an 8-percent sample of mills in Classes II and I-b (annual production of 200,000 to 999,000 board feet), (2) a 4-percent sample of mills in Classes 0 and I-a (annual production of less than 200,000 board feet), and (3) a 20-percent sample of mills in Class III. On the basis of these samples the production of the nonresponding mills was calculated to be 103,462,000 feet, board measure, or 6 percent of the total production. The sampling error for this volume is ±24 percent and the sampling error for the total regional production is ±1.5 percent.

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